

HARL/01



LAND AT THE HILL, HARLOW, ESSEX

Evaluation Report

commissioned by Alex Pope (Faithful and Gould)

HW/PL/14/00037

August 2014

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project info

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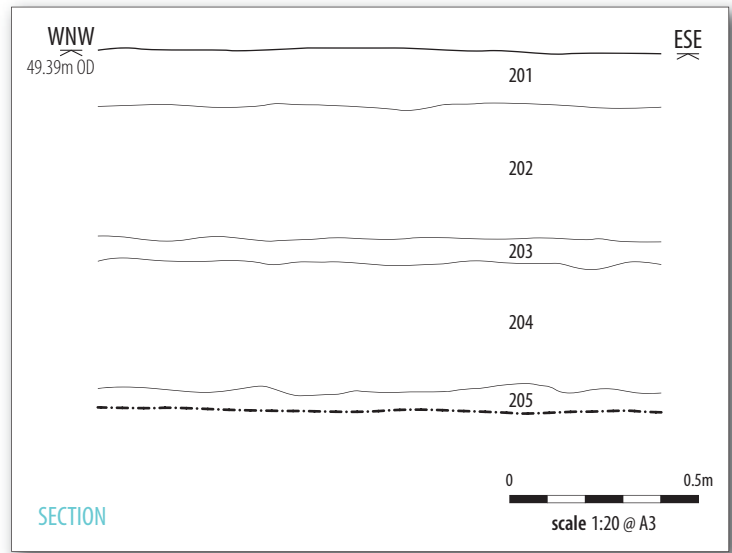


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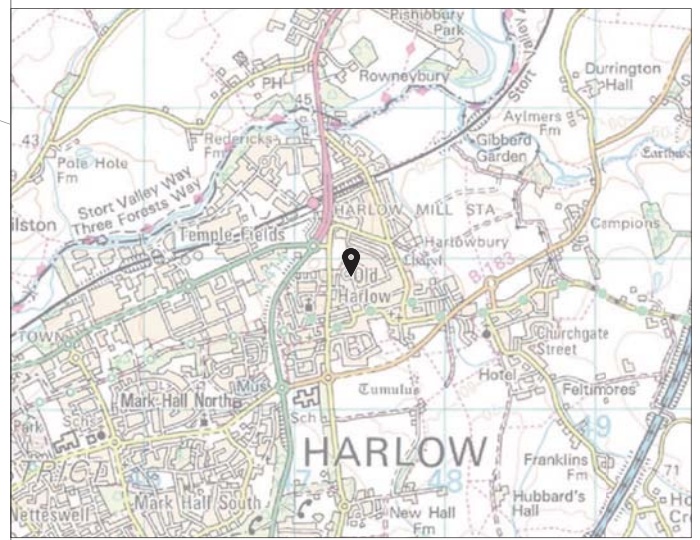
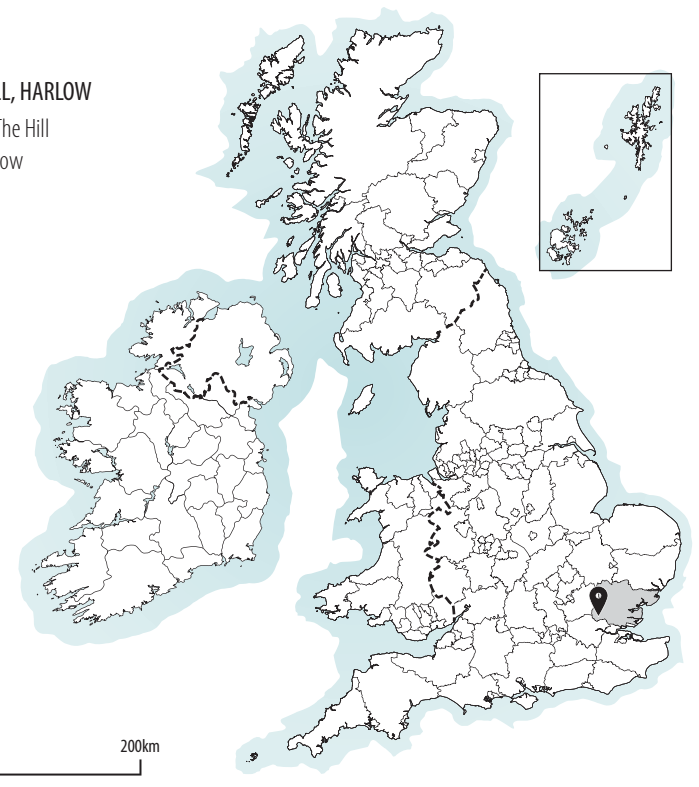
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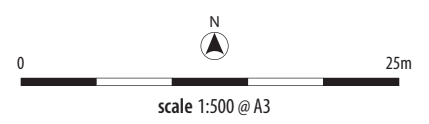
THE HILL, HARLOW
land at The Hill
Old Harlow
Harlow
Essex



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- KEY**
- site boundary
 - test pit location
 - proposed building footprints
 - service (Thames Water SW)



ILLUS 1
Site location

LAND AT THE HILL, HARLOW, ESSEX

Evaluation Report

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd conducted a programme of archaeological work, consisting of the excavation of eight test pits, on land at The Hill, Harlow, Essex. This was in response to an archaeological condition placed on planning permission for the construction of seven houses on the site. All of the test pits revealed quantities of modern levelling deposits, varying in quantity dependent on the natural topography of the land. This overlay a buried topsoil, over significant quantities of subsoil deposit, over the natural chalky-sand and silty-clay deposit. No archaeological remains were encountered in any of the test pits.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLANNING BACKGROUND

Planning permission has been obtained by Harlow District Council for the construction of seven houses at The Hill, Harlow, Essex (Planning Ref: HW/PL/14/00037). An archaeological condition is attached to the planning permission, stating that a programme of archaeological work must be undertaken.

The archaeological work is being carried out in order to assess the extent, nature and survival of archaeological features within those parts of the site where intrusive development will take place. The results will allow the Historic Environment Advisor at Essex County Council (HEA) to determine the significance of any archaeological remains within the development area and the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource. Decisions on the type and scope of mitigation measures (if required by the HEA) will be based on the results of field evaluation.

The remit of the programme of archaeological work was outlined by Atkins in a 'Written Scheme of Investigation' (Atkins 2014), and agreed with the HEA. This consisted of an archaeological evaluation comprising six to eight test pits excavated within the development area. Atkins commissioned Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd to undertake this evaluation and produce a report on the results.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The development area (henceforth known as the DA) is located in the northeastern part of Harlow, within the area known as 'Old Harlow', to the west of the road 'The Hill' (centred at NGR TL 47300 11925). It is bounded by an area of green open land to the north and

west, and residential areas to the east and south (including the back gardens of properties on 'The Hill' to the east).

The DA is roughly rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 90m by 25m, and consists of an open grassed area in the northern part and concrete foundations / hard-standing of previous garages in the southern part.

The natural ground surface appears to fall locally in a westerly direction, however the DA itself has been artificially terraced and is relatively level – falling gently in a northwesterly direction from an elevation of c.50.7m OD in the southeastern corner to c.47.5m OD in the north-western corner.

The geology of the DA consists of superficial glacial deposits described as 'The Lowestoft Formation' (Diamicton), commonly referred to as Boulder Clay, overlying soils of the Lambeth Group and Thanet Sand Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk).

A geotechnical and land contamination assessment report of the DA (LBH Wembley 2012) noted the presence of leveling materials of 1–1.5m along the western parts of the site – thought to have been sourced during the construction of the adjacent houses. Beneath this were variable deposits of clay-silt and sand, which overly glacial deposits of Boulder Clay and sand and gravel.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Harlow was a Roman town, and the DA is thought to have been situated in the southern periphery of this town. Two Scheduled Monuments of this date – Harlow Roman temple and a Roman villa – are positioned c.500m to the northwest and c.800m to the northeast of the DA respectively. Station Road, some 60m to the west of the DA, is marked as a Roman road in the Harlow Historic



Town Project Assessment Report, which may suggest that Roman activity would be concentrated around it. However, this road is currently embanked, and is shown as embanked on 19th century maps, which may suggest that it was constructed as a road crossing a marshy (and potentially uninhabitable) area at this time.

Some medieval activity is attested in the general area, with Harlowbury deserted medieval village and its chapel c.350m to the east of the DA. Furthermore, the medieval township of Harlow was positioned in the area of Old Harlow (thought to be centred around the junction of Station Road and Market Street, c.250m southwest of the DA), and developed after the grant in 1218 of a market and annual fair (HER: 9122). Some medieval features, including a pit and gully during an evaluation on Station Road (HER: 46449), have been uncovered in the general area, although none in close proximity to the DA.

The later history of the DA and surrounding areas can be gathered from examining historic maps. The 1888 OS Map shows the site within the north-western corner of a large open field, with field boundaries corresponding with the current northern and western site boundaries. The situation remained unchanged until the late 1930s when roads are shown laid out to the north and east of the DA, however the DA and immediate surroundings remained undeveloped until at least 1951 with houses on The Hill first shown on a map dated to 1960. The 1965 Map shows the site to have been levelled to a terrace, with a bank indicated along the western boundary – residential garages are shown in the extreme southern part of the site with the rest of the DA shown as playground. These garages were subsequently extended and covered the southern half of the site by 1975. No changes have since been made to the DA, apart from the removal of the garages within the last few years.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the test pit evaluation was to obtain useful information concerning the presence, character, date, status and level of preservation of any surviving archaeological remains, and to determine the extent of modern made ground fill deposits observed during the geotechnical works. It will also allow the curatorial authority to determine the impact of the proposed development on the archaeological resource, and to discuss the necessity for the preservation by record and/or the possibilities which may exist (via Masterplanning changes) to preserve certain areas of archaeological remains in situ if appropriate and thus determine their significance.

The archaeological investigations were carried out in order to:

- assess extent, layout, structure and date of features and deposits of archaeological interest;
- establish the presence and extent of modern made ground fill deposits, and the nature of the levelling and other ground remodelling undertaken in the 20th century.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

The test pit evaluation was carried out on the 14th August 2014. A total of eight test pits were excavated across the DA, all measuring 3m in length by 1.6m in width. Six of these were positioned within the footprints of proposed buildings (two on each building footprint), with a further two in areas between these buildings.

A JCB equipped with a toothless bucket was used to remove topsoil under direct archaeological control (with existing concrete surfaces being broken out using a breaker). Excavation continued until clean geological sediments or archaeological deposits were encountered.

2.3 RECORDING

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) and in line with the approved WSI (Atkins 2014). All test pits and contexts were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological standards. All stratigraphic relationships, in each test-pit, were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was recorded by digital survey using a differential GPS.

A full photographic record comprising digital photography was taken. A metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs.

3 RESULTS

Full test pit descriptions, including orientation, length, and depth are presented in Appendix A1.1. Technical details of individual contexts are presented in Appendix A1.2. Contexts are numbered by test pit number: i.e. test pit 1 (101), test pit 2 (201).

Modern levelling deposits were observed in all of the test pits directly beneath the concrete surface / turf and topsoil. This levelling deposit generally consisted of a compact brown / orange gravelly deposit, with some areas of black and grey clays. Small pieces of concrete and CBM were found within this deposit. The thickness of this deposit was between 0.25m (test pit 8) and 0.85m (test pit 6). Generally, thicker deposits were observed in the test pits on the western side of the DA (test pit 2, 4 and 6) – this is because of the natural sloping of the land down towards the west, such that greater quantities of fill material were needed to level the land.

A band of grey-brown silty deposit, between 0.1m and 0.3m in thickness, interpreted as the buried topsoil, was observed in the majority of the test-pits (except test pits 5 and 7). The levels at which this was found reflects the natural topography of the area (sloping down towards the west). It seems likely that the topsoil around test pits 5 and 7 (the south-eastern part of the DA) was stripped during the levelling works – this would have originally been the highest area within the DA, and so some preliminary work may have been done here before the importation of the fill material.

Beneath the buried topsoil was a thick deposit of light brown / orange silty-sand. The thickness of this varied from between 0.3m (test pit 3) to 1m+ (test pit 6). This is interpreted as the previous

ILLUS 2

Photo showing the site with excavated test pits, looking S



ILLUS 3

S facing section of test pit 2



ILLUS 4

Photo of test pit 7, looking NW



subsoil, or potentially the upper levels of the Boulder Clay. Interestingly, this deposit was not observed in test pit 7, where the modern levelling deposits directly overlay the natural sand deposit – possibly the subsoil deposit was stripped away in this area during the 20th century ground remodelling.

Undisturbed natural deposits generally comprised a yellow-white sandy deposit, with chalk and flints. This was observed in all of the test pits in the northern and central parts of the DA (test pits 1–4, 7 and 8). The natural geology in test pit 5, in the northern part of the site, comprised a yellow silty-clay, and it was not reached in test pit 6 (excavation stopped at 2.5m). This natural deposit was observed between 1m (test pit 7) and 1.8m (test pits 1 and 2) beneath the present ground-surface (although at a depth of more than 2.5m in test pit 6) – the differences in this generally being accounted for by the natural topography of the land which slopes down to the northwest. This natural deposit is thought to be part of the ‘Lowestoft Formation’, which is an extensive sheet of chalky till (with outwash sands, gravels, silts, and clays), and is characterised by chalk and flint content.

No archaeological finds or features were identified in any of the test pits.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological test pit evaluation uncovered no evidence for activity pre-dating the 20th century levelling of the site. No remains relating to the Roman town of Harlow were discovered, and nor were remains dating to any other period of activity.

The stratigraphy in the test pits related to the levelling of the land in the 1960s, when garages were constructed in the southern part of the site. Significant quantities of modern levelling materials were observed in all test pits (with greater quantities observed where the land was naturally lower, particularly along the western side of the DA). This generally overlay a buried



topsoil over subsoil deposits, with the natural deposit (sand with chalk and silty-clay) observed at depths of between 1m and over 2.5m beneath the present ground-surface.

No features of archaeological significance were found during this evaluation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 SITE REGISTERS

A1.1 Trench register

TP	Orientation	Description	Length (m)	Depth of overburden (m)	Max depth (m)
1	NE-SW	Turf and topsoil (101) overlying modern levelling deposits (102) over buried topsoil (103) over subsoil / upper natural (104) over natural sand and chalk (105).	3	1.8	1.9
2	E-W	Turf and topsoil (201) overlying modern levelling deposits (202) over buried topsoil (203) over subsoil / upper natural (204) over natural sand and chalk (205).	3	1.8	1.9
3	NW-SE	Turf and topsoil (301) overlying modern levelling deposits (302) over buried topsoil (303) over subsoil / upper natural (304) over natural sand and chalk (305).	3	1.2	1.3
4	N-S	Turf and topsoil (401) overlying modern levelling deposits (402) over buried topsoil (403) over subsoil / upper natural (404) over natural sand and chalk (405).	3	1.5	1.6
5	N-S	Concrete surface (501) overlying modern levelling deposits (502) over subsoil / upper natural (503) over natural silty-clay (504).	3	1.7	1.8
6	E-W	Concrete surface (601) overlying modern levelling deposits (602) over buried topsoil (603) over subsoil (604).	3	2.5+	2.5
7	E-W	Concrete surface (701) overlying modern levelling deposits (702) over natural sand and chalk (703).	3	1	1.2
8	NEE-SWW	Turf and topsoil (801) overlying modern levelling deposits (802) over buried topsoil (803) over subsoil / upper natural (804) over natural sand and chalk (805).	3	1.4	1.45

A1.2 Context register

Context	TP	Description	Dimensions (m)	Context	TP	Description	Dimensions (m)
101	1	Turf and topsoil – organic mid-brown silty deposit.	0–0.3	302	3	Modern levelling deposits – orange brown, with some darker brown, compact gravelly deposit.	0.25–0.7
102	1	Modern levelling deposits – compact orange-brown silty gravel.	0.3–0.75	303	3	Buried topsoil – band of grey-brown silty deposit with pebbles and CBM flecks.	0.7–0.9
103	1	Buried topsoil – band of grey-brown silty deposit.	0.75–0.9	304	3	Subsoil – light brown / orange sandy deposit with pebbles.	0.9–1.2
104	1	Subsoil – light brown silty-sand with pebbles.	0.9–1.8	305	3	Natural – yellow / white sand with chalk.	1.2+
105	1	Natural – yellow / white sand with chalk and flints.	1.8+	401	4	Turf and topsoil – organic mid-brown silty deposit.	0–0.3
201	2	Turf and topsoil – organic mid-brown silty deposit.	0–0.3	402	4	Modern levelling deposits – mixture of orange-brown and grey gravelly and clay deposits.	0.3–0.95
202	2	Modern levelling deposits – mix of compact orange-brown gravelly deposit (with concrete), and patches of black / grey clay.	0.3–1	403	4	Buried topsoil – band of grey-brown silty deposit.	0.95–1.1
203	2	Buried topsoil – band of mid-grey-brown silty deposit with pebbles.	1–1.1	404	4	Subsoil – light brown sandy-silt deposit.	1.1–1.5
204	2	Subsoil – light brown silty-sand deposit with pebbles.	1.1–1.8	405	4	Natural – grey / white sand with chalk.	1.5+
205	2	Natural – yellow sand with chalk and flints.	1.8+	501	5	Concrete surface.	0–0.4
301	3	Turf and topsoil – organic mid-grey-brown silty deposit.	0–0.25	502	5	Modern levelling deposits – mixture of mid-brown, orange, and black, clay deposits.	0.4–0.9
				503	5	Subsoil – orange-brown silty deposit with pebbles.	0.9–1.7



Context	TP	Description	Dimensions (m)
504	5	Natural – yellow silty-clay.	1.7+
601	6	Concrete surface.	0–0.55
602	6	Modern levelling deposits – mixture of mid-brown and yellow-brown gravelly-clay, with some redeposited natural, concrete, and CBM.	0.55–1.4
603	6	Buried topsoil – band of mid-grey-brown silty deposit with pebbles.	1.4–1.5
604	6	Subsoil – mid orange-brown silty-clay with some pebbles.	1.5–2.5+
701	7	Concrete surface.	0–0.4
702	7	Modern levelling deposit – dark grey-brown silty-gravel.	0.4–1
703	7	Natural: sand and chalk.	1+
801	8	Turf and topsoil – organic mid-brown silty deposit.	0–0.25
802	8	Modern levelling deposits – yellow-brown compact gravelly deposit.	0.25–0.5
803	8	Buried topsoil – mid grey-brown silty deposit with pebbles and CBM fragments.	0.5–0.8
804	8	Subsoil – light brown silty deposit.	0.8–1.4
805	8	Natural: yellow / cream sand with chalk.	1.4+

A1.3 Photographic register

Photo	Digital	Direction facing	Description
001	0267	–	ID shot
002	0269	S	Site from NE corner
003	0270	SE	Site from NW corner
004	0271	SW	Test pit 1
005	0272	SW	Test pit 1
006	0273	NW	E facing section of test pit 1
007	0274	NW	E facing section of test pit 1
008	0275	SW	Test pit 2
009	0276	SW	Test pit 2
010	0277	NW	S facing section of test pit 2
011	0278	NW	S facing section of test pit 2
012	0279	NE	Test pit 8
013	0280	NE	Test pit 8
014	0281	N	S facing section of test pit 8
015	0282	N	S facing section of test pit 8
016	0283	S	Test pit 3
017	0284	S	Test pit 3

Photo	Digital	Direction facing	Description
018	0285	SW	NE facing section of test pit 3
019	0286	SW	NE facing section of test pit 3
020	0287	SW	Test pit 4
021	0288	SW	Test pit 4
022	0289	W	E facing section of test pit 4
023	0290	W	E facing section of test pit 4
024	0291	NE	Test pit 7
025	0292	NE	Test pit 7
026	0293	W	Test pit 7
027	0294	W	Test pit 7
028	0295	N	S facing section of test pit 7
029	0296	N	S facing section of test pit 7
030	0297	SW	Test pit 5
031	0298	SW	Test pit 5
032	0299	E	W facing section of test pit 5
033	0300	E	W facing section of test pit 5
034	0301	SW	Test pit 6
035	0302	SW	Test pit 6
036	0303	S	N facing section of test pit 6
037	0304	S	N facing section of test pit 6
038	0305	S	N facing section of test pit 6
039	0306	S	N facing section of test pit 6
040	0307	N	Site from S
041	0308	N	Site from S
042	0309	S	Backfilled test pits in northern part of site
043	0310	W	Backfilled test pit 8
044	0311	W	Backfilled test pit 7
045	0312	N	Backfilled test pits 5 and 6

A1.4 Drawing register

Drawing	Scale	Plan / Section	Description
001	1:20	S	S facing section of test pit 2



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